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ART. VII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Third Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor of Massachusetts, embracing the Account of its Operations and Inquiries from March 1, 1871, to March 1, 1872.* Boston: Wright and Potter, State Printers. 1872.

IN closing his famous chapter upon the state of England in 1685, Lord Macaulay, after remarking that nothing had as yet been said of the great body of the people, goes on to add: "Nor can very much be said. The most numerous class is precisely the class respecting which we have the most meagre information. . . . The press now often sends forth in a day a greater quantity of discussion and declamation about the condition of the workingmen than was published during the twenty-eight years which elapsed between the Restoration and the Revolution." The inquisitive and erudite historian of A. D. 2070, or thereabouts, while attempting to describe the condition of the workingmen in America during the period which followed the great war of the Rebellion, will have no such poverty as regards material to deplore. On the contrary, it is difficult to imagine that unhappy investigator except in abject despair, as he stands in presence of the tons upon tons of raw material now annually stored away for his future consumption. Here is the little Commonwealth of Massachusetts, — it numbers within its limits about one third as many inhabitants as the single city of London, a few hundred thousand more, perhaps, than Liverpool, — and, besides all the innumerable miscellaneous documents relating to this one subject, here is an official report upon it which this year numbers five hundred and ninety-eight pages, and is nevertheless not so bulky as its immediate predecessor. Of what order of man is the future historian to be? — how many hours will there be in his day? — how many days in his year? — how many years in his life? — The highest scientific authorities assert that the human race is just as susceptible of improvement by careful breeding as are the beasts of the field. Just as we obtain size, or strength, or speed, or fineness of fleece, or abundance of milk by a careful and scientific regard to stock, so they maintain that, by a proper attention to genealogies, we could, in a few generations, produce a race of men eight or ten feet high, and with advantages over the present race as regards longevity and intellect no less pronounced. It would certainly be well to begin this experiment, with a view to the production of the historian of the future, with the least possible delay. If Macaulay or Buckle or Hallam or Grote left any sons, they should at once

be appropriated by the state and married to any daughters who may now be outstanding of Mrs. Markham or — but it would seem that female historians have not been addicted to matrimony, and it is probable that Miss Hannah More, Miss Strickland, and Miss Pardoe did not leave any daughters. Evidently, however, nothing short of some such vigorous course of proceeding as that here suggested will meet the emergency; the historian of the future capable, not of mastering, but even of facing the vast yearly accumulations of material intended for his use, will have to be at least ten feet in height, and pass eighty of his hundred and twenty years in an intensity of toil to which the present race is not equal.

To return, however, to the immediate cause of this digression, — the somewhat voluminous Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics for the present year. The head of that board has evidently pursued the usual course with all officials having a public printer at command; he has printed everything, and has compressed nothing. The result is a mass of raw material, indicating great industry, little judgment, and no discrimination on the part of those who prepared it. As an example of this a large part of an editorial may be referred to (p. 115), which was bodily adopted from a daily newspaper, as illustrating an important point, without any verification of the statistics contained in it, which, when too late for correction, were discovered to be only sixty-six per cent out of the way. So it is throughout, and as a result we have facts of great interest and opinions of no value whatever; statistics, more or less reliable, and conclusions deduced from them or not, as the case may be; a vast amount of correspondence, some of it extremely instructive; elaborate historical treatises, stretching over the last five hundred years; infinite columns of figures, and extracts from daily papers, — all tumbled together with disputed industrial theories, here advanced as settled facts, and garnished with specimens of the worst rhetoric and the most outrageous attempts at fine writing ever perpetrated since the days of George Gilfillan.

No unprejudiced critic would seek to deny that these Reports possess great value, and should by all means be continued. What we want from them, however, and have a right to expect, is facts and legitimately deduced conclusions, all expressed in the simplest possible language and in the smallest compass consistent with precision. We do not desire the views of the Bureau upon the question of female suffrage, on page 114; nor an eloquent digression upon what the Bureau is pleased to term "the social evil," on page 116; nor a vague, general suggestion that it would be a relief "to all small capitalists" if none but "the extremely rich" paid taxes, on page 46; nor singular asser-

tions to the effect that the fact that decreased wages have not in a given instance followed a decrease in working time is worth more than any additional cost of production, on page 251. Neither do we want panegyrics on a compulsory education law, on page 450 ; nor a philippic on "merciless landlords" and tenement-houses, on page 438 ; nor violent denunciation of the general and indescribable wickedness of the time, on page 464. In perfectly plain language, these numerous impertinences constitute a very great blemish on what is, in spite of them, a valuable work and a monument of most commendable industry.

The present Report is made up of an examination into the wages of laborers of both sexes in all the multifarious industries of Massachusetts, beginning with agriculture and closing with manufactures. In this connection many communications to the Bureau from individual employers and workingmen are published, and these indeed constitute what is by far the most interesting and instructive portion of the volume. An elaborate argument is then attempted by the officers of the Bureau to show that "the hundreds of millions" of money held by the savings banks of the State do not belong to the working classes, but are deposited in those institutions by persons of wealth. Some two hundred pages then follow, describing the visits of the Bureau to factories, and giving the evidence collected in them, with desultory reports on accidents from unguarded machinery and the hardships inflicted on the laboring classes through the agency of the "truck system" ; more or less space is also devoted to the several subjects of strikes, the homes of the working classes, and the education of factory children. The Report practically closes with an elaborate discussion and historical investigation of the purchasing power of wages during the last five hundred years in England, and the last two hundred years in America. In regard to some of these subjects, and the spirit in which they have been approached in the preparation of this document, we propose to make a few very general remarks in the course of this notice. Before doing so, however, we wish to mention one lamentable omission of the Bureau, which causes this Report somewhat to resemble the celebrated performance of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet omitted.

The one aspect of the labor question which now excites a wellnigh universal interest is co-operation. To this every intelligent and thoughtful student of social and industrial problems is looking with hope, not unmixed with doubt. Every experiment in this direction is therefore watched with interest, and its authentic and detailed history is carefully studied. The Bureau of Industry was not apparently ignorant of this fact. In its Report for 1871 it fully recognized the deep interest felt in the subject (p. 552), but devoted to it only eight

pages out of six hundred and fifty, "reserving a full discussion for another Report" (p. 452). The present Report, in apparent fulfilment of this promise, opened with these brave words: "The great question to be considered is, how to adjust industrial and social relations, so that labor and capital shall become vigorous and productive partners, instead of, as now, unproductive and wasteful opponents; or, in other words, how to make co-operation possible and practicable." If this is, indeed, "the great question," it certainly would seem to deserve a decent amount of consideration. Instead of getting it, however, it disappears on page 6 of the body of the Report only to reappear on page 537, and there to be dismissed with the following sententious judgment, evolved apparently from the inner consciousness of the Bureau: "If the people were not poor, they would not work for wages; but they are so poor and ignorant, that they cannot and know not how to co-operate." We can only respond in the language of the lamented Mr. Squeers, while inspecting a certain other milk-and-water compound, "Here's richness!" This is on page 537 of the Report; on page 536 we had just been informed, partly in italics, "Cheap labor means China, with her millions of poor, with her stunted growth and inferior race. Dear labor means America, with her free and intelligent citizens. For poor as are our laborers, they are better off than the laborers of any other country. *Here we have the highest wages and the best market in the world.*" Probably the officers of the Bureau have never heard of the co-operative associations in England, and especially of the remarkable financial success which has attended those at Oldham. They certainly had, however, heard of those in Germany, inasmuch as in the Appendix to this very Report (pp. 548-557) they print an interesting and valuable account of them, describing their rapid rise and great prosperity. Is then, after all, the "dear labor" of America — are those laborers "who are better off than the laborers of any other country" — so much poorer and so much more ignorant than the workingmen of England and Germany, that they are wholly unable to grapple with those problems which the others have successfully solved? If they are, we can only say that their numerous communications to this Bureau give a singularly false impression in regard to them.

Upon this point, as upon many others, we regret to be obliged to say that the officers of the Bureau afford unmistakable indications that they do not approach their subject in a spirit of judicial investigation at all. On the contrary, they scarcely make a pretence of concealing their strongly preconceived theories, to an agreement with which they are incessantly forcing their facts to conform. In the present case the failure of co-operation to take any root in Massachusetts is to be

accounted for. That it has failed to take root there is patent; the fact must somehow be explained. In a light and airy manner an explanation is found in the general ignorance and poverty of the people; their poverty is demonstrated through an ingenious system of figuring, which plainly shows, to those disposed to trust it, that, with some comparatively immaterial exceptions, the savings banks are used only as places of hoarding by wealthy people; and their ignorance is left to rest on the bold assertion of the Bureau.

With the utmost deference, we desire to express our own belief that these causes have nothing whatever to do with the result sought to be accounted for; and, moreover, our equally firm belief that the officers did not themselves really think that they had. They wished to account for a most important fact in some way, and so they accounted for it, regardless of the whole previous tenor of their Report, in the way which first suggested itself to them. We fancy that we can offer them a solution much nearer the truth. The laboring class of Massachusetts has failed to develop the idea of co-operation, not because it has lacked either the intelligence or the means to do so, but simply because it has found it to be, or thought it to be, more profitable to employ its means in another way, and has been led to divert its intelligence to another, and, as we believe, false issue in the struggle. In the first place, as regards its means. Savings banks do not receive deposits, large or small, in order to look at them; they receive them from one set of persons in order to loan them to another. In Massachusetts they hold in this way millions of dollars, belonging indisputably to the wage-earning class, upon the whole of which they pay dividends, and a very large proportion of which they loan to capitalists, who pay the wages aforesaid, and on the whole of this they receive interest. Through this machinery the workman loans his savings to carry on, not uncommonly, the operations of the very mill in which he earns his wages. Instead, however, of doing it on shares, as he would under a co-operative system, and thus incurring the risks as well as sharing the profits of the business, he accepts in lieu thereof a fixed and certain remuneration for his money. Through the savings-bank system this remuneration always has been, and now is, so high in Massachusetts that the wage-earning class prefers it to any probable return on the same capital if employed directly in business by the class itself. In other words, the class, as a whole, finds it in the long run more remunerative to deposit its savings in the bank than to invest them in the mill. So clearly is this the fact, that the Bureau of Statistics devotes page after page to showing that not only the wage-earning class, but the capitalist class itself, finds the savings bank the most profitable place of investment

within its reach. If, as the Bureau so elaborately tries to prove, the vastly greater proportion of the savings-bank fund belongs to the wealthy classes, who can thus find no better use to make of their money, what possible inducement can exist for the poorest classes to go into a co-operative business? That which the wealthy do not find so profitable as the savings banks, they certainly will not. It would, therefore, seem not improbable that the wage-earning class neglect co-operation, not because they are too poor to engage in it, but simply because they get a larger and safer return on their money by employing it in another way.

So much for the means; now as to the ignorance. For years Massachusetts has rung with the cry of Labor Reform. The purest eloquence, the most thorough investigation have been directed to it. That the discussion has lacked intelligence is the last allegation which ought to be made against it, at least by those having the Bureau of Industry in charge. Perhaps it may never have occurred to them, however, that the discussion has always taken one direction. The cry has never been for co-operation, but always for new laws, for fresh statutes, for legislative enactments regulating the hours of labor and the profits of capital. Their agitation has been political, and not industrial. With this these very Reports are full. To it they devote one hundred pages to each one they bestow on co-operation; and the result is, and probably always will be, an empty sham instead of a living reality. The wage-earning class are in New England on the wrong track; they started there, and the Bureau of Statistics is doing its best to keep them there. They are seeking to obtain that through political agitation which can only come through industrial reorganization. To the last they are paying no attention, their thoughts being wholly fixed on the first; and then the Bureau of Industry turns round and, with Oldham and Delitzsch before its face, stimulates them in the true path with the information that they are too ignorant to deal with such problems as these. Of one thing the Bureau may rest very sure, co-operation will never be established until it has been attempted; and it will not be attempted as long as the leaders of the labor movement are in breathless pursuit of that *ignis fatuus*, social reform by act of Legislature. How much the Bureau itself is contributing to the popular understanding of co-operation, we have already indicated; we will only add that, while in the Report of 1871 they allude to it, as we have stated, "reserving a full discussion for another Report" (p. 452), in the Report of 1872 they have got so far as to treat it with the following degree of elaboration: "We leave that for another Report" (p. 527).

We have already referred to the unfortunate appearance of bias, — of

preconceived conclusion, which is painfully apparent throughout these Reports, and never fails to occasion the gravest doubts as to any judgment arrived at. The whole discussion of the ownership of the savings-bank fund is a case in point, but even a more flagrant one is found in the discussion of the eight-hour question. It is very evident that the minds of the officials in charge of the Bureau are made up that the proper working day is eight hours long, and that in the eight-hour day absolutely more as well as better work can be accomplished than in the ten-hour day. As for the day of eleven hours, the advocates of it are evidently regarded as miscreants, not entitled even to a patient hearing. Of seventy-two employers of labor, whose replies to the questions put to them by the Bureau are quoted in this Report, thirty, or six only less than one half, expressed themselves as opposed to the ten-hour system. They are dismissed in the following summary way, which leads one to ask himself why they were ever invited to express any opinion upon the subject at all, unless it was to be a favorable one: "The advocates of eleven hours have utterly failed to sustain themselves in their continued adhesion to a system that England outgrew twenty-two years ago, — a system unworthy of our State and nation, and one that would not last a month if the victims of it were men instead of women and children, as most of them are" (p. 240).

It is, however, in the elaborate examination of the relative purchasing power of wages at different periods during the last five hundred years (pp. 468 – 534) that this spirit of preconception is most apparent. It here, indeed, leads the Bureau to the clear statement of conclusions very difficult to reconcile. The authority of Hallam, in his "Middle Ages," is quoted to the effect that it is "unpleasant to remark that the laboring classes, especially those engaged in agriculture, were better provided with the means of subsistence in the reign of Edward III. or of Henry VI. — a century later — than they are now"; and "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that, however the laborer of to-day is benefited by the cheapness of manufactured commodities, and many inventions of common utility, *he is much inferior in ability to support a family* to his ancestors of three and four centuries ago." Froude, also, is authority for the following statement: "Until the time of the interlude of the reign of Edward VI., the working classes were in a condition more than prosperous, enjoying far beyond what falls to the general lot of laborers in long-settled countries, and far beyond those of Germany or France." Fortified with the weight of these names, the Bureau enters upon its independent investigation, through the details of which we do not propose to follow it, and concludes with these two propositions side by side: "Not without forceful truth, then, is the remark of Mr.

Hallam, quoted before, and that of Mr. Levi, that the earnings of the workmen have not kept pace with the progress of the times; and justifiable is the inference that the purchasing power of their earnings in the nineteenth century is not in proportion to what it was in the fourteenth and fifteenth." This is the first proposition on page 499, and on page 534 we find the second in these words: "The distribution of wealth has also been going on, and, though extreme wealth and extreme poverty are to-day the great curses of the world, there is a better distribution than ever before, counting time by centuries, not by years. . . . There are more people removed a week from want than ever before; more people better housed, better fed, and better clothed; though there is but little advance in the *margin* of wage; and wages being continually kept down to the actual cost of living, the element of advance is to be found almost entirely in the superiority of their style of life." If the improvement in the condition of any class in society is not found "in the superiority of its style of life," we should like to inquire where it is to be found? There is a somewhat musty proverb in relation to the obvious impossibility of eating one's cake and having it too. If the "wage-earning" class lived to-day as they did in the days of Edward III., we greatly question whether there would not be found to be a most decided "advance in the *margin* of wage." As, however, they spend a portion of that margin "in the superiority of their style of life," it is not very surprising that they do not have the whole of it left. In fact, with the utmost respect for the authority of Mr. Hallam, and none at all for that of Mr. Froude, we are disposed to entirely distrust the conclusions at which they arrived upon this point. The only sure indication of general prosperity is general contentment. No people ever did or ever will rise in a mass in tumultuous rebellion against the existing social conditions when they are well fed, well housed, and generally prosperous. We do not often hear of such insurrections now: the last was in starving France in 1789. Yet these are the days of strikes, of unions, of combination and agitation, with the newspaper, the telegraph, and the thousand other means of enabling the discontented in one place to know the feelings and actions of the discontented in another. They had none of these appliances in the ideally prosperous days of Edward III. and Henry VI. The counties of England were more foreign to each other then than are the nations of Europe now. How was it in regard to that popular contentment, the one sure indication of general prosperity? Wat Tyler was yet a boy when Edward III. died and when the horrible Jacqueries broke out in France, and Jack Cade found followers enough in England in the time of Henry VI.; the history of the two renowned popular

risings under those leaders furnishes us with some means of forming a judgment on this point. Yet they would now have us believe that the well-fed, prosperous, highly paid, and greatly to be envied peasantry of those dark and troubled times rose in a mass to kill, burn, and destroy, without cause, without leaders, without combination, — rising up against those before whom they were wont to crouch like dogs, and whom they regarded and who regarded them as beings of another order, — this they did in the excess of their contentment: they had waxed fat and kicked! *Credat Judæus Apella!*

Upon this subject the officers of the Bureau have cited the authorities of Hallam and Froude and Levi. We began this notice with one quotation from Macaulay, and we do not know that we can do better than to close it with another. First, however, we will give one final extract from the Report before us; it contains a not unpleasant picture of the good old days when England was merry England indeed, and the other side of it shall be presented by Macaulay and not by us: "Ask the workman of the fourteenth century what he deemed household and other comforts to be, and he would probably reply that, with a weather-tight cottage of two or three rooms, with fresh rushes on the floor of one of them once a month; with meat, beer, and cabbage every day; a chance on the common (then not enclosed) for cow, pig, and poultry; with 30 *d.* a year for clothes of each of his family of four persons, and a chance now and then to see a bear-baiting or a cock-fight, or a game at quarter-staff, or at the butts, or at the Christmas mummeries, and he would be very comfortable indeed" (p. 482). "Very comfortable," we imagine; and that, too, without mentioning a grand piano, or a trotting sulky, or an occasional visit in warm weather to the sea-shore, which must have been included as a matter of course. Now let us examine the reverse of the picture, and we commend its study to the careful attention of the Bureau of Industry. "The more carefully," says Macaulay, "we examine the history of the past, the more reason shall we find to dissent from those who imagine that our age has been fruitful of new social evils. The truth is that the evils are, with scarcely an exception, old. That which is new is the intelligence which discerns, and the humanity which remedies, them.

"It is now the fashion to place the golden age of England in times when noblemen were destitute of comforts, the want of which would be intolerable to a modern footman; when farmers and shop-keepers breakfasted on loaves the very sight of which would raise a riot in a modern workhouse; when to have a clean shirt once a week was a privilege reserved for the higher class of gentry; when men died faster in the

purest country air than they now die in the most pestilential lanes of our towns; and when men died faster in the lanes of our towns than they now die on the coast of Guiana. We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped, and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that laboring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye bread; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and industrious workingman. And yet it may then be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as the time when England was truly merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendor of the rich."

2. — *Third Annual Report of the State Board of Health of Massachusetts.* Boston: Wright and Potter, State Printers. 1872.

THERE are few indications of a sound modern progress more encouraging than the series of Reports of the Massachusetts State Board of Health. The two last of the series are, indeed, open to the criticism of being much too diffuse; and this criticism may be made upon the Reports of all the Massachusetts commissions. This year, apparently stimulated by the attacks of General B. F. Butler, they have even excelled themselves in respect to prolixity. The Commissioners of Internal Fisheries led off with 348 pages; the volume before us contains 326 pages; the Board of Railroad Commissioners found themselves unable to express themselves fully in less than 800 pages, the Bureau of Statistics of Labor required 598 pages; the Board of State Charities, 560 pages; the Board of Education, 300 pages; and so on through a mass of printed matter which simply defies examination through its mere inert resistance to labor. After all, is it absolutely necessary that everything should be printed by men the moment they become public officers? — Are our bureaus and commissions too lazy, or are they unable to discriminate, compress, and reject? The Report of the Board of Health for 1872 would be infinitely more valuable if it had been reduced one half, and in that one half could have been included all of general value which the present volume contains. Dr. White's paper on "Vegetable Parasites," for instance, carefully prepared as it is and to a certain class of readers doubtless very interesting, had been better left out altogether. It would have done very well